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Chairperson: Mr. Majoor ..... (Netherlands)

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08-52629 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

1. **The Chairperson** said that he took it that the Commission, in accordance with its established practice, wished to hold an open meeting.

2. *It was so decided.*

Adoption of the agenda (PBC/2/SLE/6*)

3. *The agenda was adopted.*

Biannual review of the Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework and report of the Peacebuilding Commission on its visit to Sierra Leone (1-7 June 2008)

4. **The Chairperson** drew attention to the conclusions and recommendations of the biannual review of the implementation of the Sierra Leone Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework, as contained in PBC/2/SLE/L.1. The document had been developed jointly by the Government of Sierra Leone, its partners in Sierra Leone and the members of the Sierra Leone configuration. On behalf of the latter, he paid tribute to the Government of Sierra Leone for its role in preparing for the first biannual review and producing such a comprehensive progress report on the implementation of the Sierra Leone Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework (PBC/2/SLE/9). He also expressed appreciation to Sierra Leone configuration members for their tireless efforts in recent months and to the United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL) and the Peacebuilding Support Office for providing invaluable support and ensuring timely information-sharing between New York and Freetown. A key element of the preparations for the biannual review had been the Commission's visit to Sierra Leone from 1 to 7 June 2008. In that connection, he expressed appreciation to Mr. Schulenburg, newly appointed Acting Executive Representative of the Secretary-General for Sierra Leone, and to the United Nations system as a whole for extending such a high degree of cooperation to the Commission during its visit and to the Government of Sierra Leone for making the visit a success.

5. While he was honoured and privileged to have facilitated the implementation process in his capacity as Chairperson, the process had only just begun. The Government of Sierra Leone and the people working on the issue in Sierra Leone and New York clearly demonstrated the necessary commitment. The challenge was to translate that commitment into action.

6. He took it that the Commission wished to adopt the conclusions and recommendations of the biannual review of the implementation of the Sierra Leone Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework, as contained in PBC/2/SLE/L.1.

7. *It was so decided.*

8. **Mr. Minah** (Sierra Leone) said that the visit by the delegation to Sierra Leone earlier that month had given participants a first-hand view of progress made thus far and challenges remaining. The Commission's open and frank exchange of views with the Government and other stakeholders had also been extremely instructive. The degree of cooperation and assistance that his Government had extended to the Commission during its visit demonstrated its commitment to the peacebuilding process and its awareness that it, too, needed to do its part.

9. In May 2008, Sierra Leone's Minister for Foreign Affairs had attended the high-level stakeholders consultation held in New York with a view to mobilizing support and expediting the implementation of the Sierra Leone Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework. His Government was encouraged by the level of international attention being given to the peacebuilding process in Sierra Leone.

10. The decision, in 2006, to place Sierra Leone on the Commission's agenda had given the country renewed optimism and confidence that the United Nations was committed to helping it make the transition from a post-conflict State to a fully functioning Member State. Initially, four main priority areas had been identified: youth employment and empowerment, justice and security sector reform, consolidation of democracy and good governance, and capacity-building. Later, a fifth priority area had been added: the energy sector. Energy was a cross-cutting issue that affected progress in other priority areas.

11. During the period under review, considerable progress had been made in a number of priority areas. In the justice sector, the backlog of cases before the courts had been reduced and judges' working conditions improved. Transportation was also now provided for key judicial officials.

12. A number of mechanisms had been introduced to ensure that good governance became the norm rather

than the exception. President Koroma had expressed his determination to combat corruption. The Anti-Corruption Commission had his full support and would soon be given prosecutorial powers, while the Commission's recently proposed Anti-Corruption Strategy had been fully endorsed by the Cabinet. The legislative action required by the Parliament had the Government's full support.

13. Preparations for the upcoming local council elections — the next major test for the security sector and the Government — were well advanced. The key players in the process, which was headed by the National Electoral Commission, were familiar with their respective functions and stood ready to ensure that the elections were a success.

14. The Parliament had recently approved two key pieces of legislation: the Sierra Leone Citizenship (Amendment) Act and the Bankruptcy Act. Those measures, which had been watched closely by civil society and the NGO community, were intended to empower Sierra Leone's citizens and create an environment conducive to private sector development.

15. Another issue of interest was the implementation of the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. As a result of financial support from the Peacebuilding Fund and other parties, the National Human Rights Commission was now fully operational and ready to take its activities beyond the capital and the west of Sierra Leone. Both Commissions were tasked with ensuring that the Government met its obligations. The Government welcomed a transparent and effective process in that regard.

16. The constitutional review process, meanwhile, was ongoing. The Cabinet had reviewed the report of the Constitutional Review Commission and the next stage of consultations, which would involve national stakeholders and civil society, should begin soon. Areas in which constitutional amendments were required were being watched closely. The Parliament was ready to do whatever was necessary in that regard.

17. While rising food and fuel prices posed a challenge to all Governments, the effects were being felt particularly acutely in Sierra Leone which, like other developing countries, depended heavily on external support and was at the mercy of the vagaries of the global economic situation. Nonetheless, his Government was fully cognizant of the fact that its primary responsibility was to secure peace, build on that peace and deliver the gains of that peace to its citizens and that, in order to succeed, it needed to mobilize international support. It also fully appreciated the fragility of the State machinery in terms of security and the economy. Given that the Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework was a flexible document, the President had recently declared that food security and investment in agriculture should be added to the priority areas contained therein. A strong agricultural sector would generate employment and boost the economy.

18. Sierra Leone's protracted civil conflict had exacerbated the flight of skilled professionals from Sierra Leone. The civil service was among those sectors most affected. As the Government sought to focus on priorities and deliver on its commitments, it would require the continued assistance of its development partners and of the Commission in addressing capacity constraints.

19. The Government of Sierra Leone welcomed the proposed replacement of UNIOSIL by the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL) and the appointment of the Acting Executive Representative of the Secretary-General for Sierra Leone, who had demonstrated that he was a committed partner in Sierra Leone's development.

20. The Government of Sierra Leone was very much aware that peacebuilding, as established through the Peacebuilding Commission, was a new process. While it would make every effort to achieve the objectives of the Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework, it would surely make mistakes. The Government therefore hoped that, in a spirit of transparency and consensus, the Commission would allow it to acknowledge those mistakes so that effective solutions could be found. There were no perfect answers to the many questions facing his Government. However, he was confident that, with the continued support of Sierra Leone's development partners and of the Commission, the peacebuilding process would be a success.

21. **The Chairperson** drew attention to the report of the second mission of the Peacebuilding Commission to Sierra Leone from 1 to 7 June 2008 (PBC/2/SLE/7). The visit had been very timely in terms of preparing for the biannual review of the implementation of the Sierra Leone Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework. Moreover, mission participants had enriched

discussions on the implementation of the Framework and the way forward. He expressed his appreciation to the representatives of Bangladesh, the Czech Republic, Egypt, El Salvador, Germany, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Sweden for their active and constructive participation in the mission and to UNIOSIL, the Peacebuilding Support Office and other United Nations entities for helping organize it.

22. The mission had been extremely productive. The delegation had met with the President of Sierra Leone, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Speaker of Parliament, the majority and minority leaders of parliament, the Chairperson and members of the National Electoral Commission, representatives of bilateral and multilateral partners, civil society organizations, the private sector and representatives of United Nations agencies, funds and programmes.

23. The delegation had observed that significant progress had been made on the implementation of a number of the commitments contained in the Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework, particularly in the areas of justice and security sector reform, combating corruption, energy sector development and preparations for the upcoming local council elections. However, it had also noted that additional and more targeted efforts were required in the areas of youth employment and empowerment, capacity-building and national reconciliation. Of particular importance was the full implementation of the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

24. It was a critical time for peace consolidation in Sierra Leone. The Government had adopted an ambitious reform agenda. It had also reaffirmed its commitment to the implementation of the Sierra Leone Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework and to its partnership with the Commission. The proposed replacement of UNIOSIL by UNIPSIL would provide an opportunity to strengthen capacity and increase support to the Government, even though the United Nations presence in the country would also be downsized considerably as a result.

25. Although the country remained peaceful and stable, life for ordinary people continued to be extremely difficult owing to food insecurity, unemployment, lack of basic services and crippling mortality rates. Furthermore, the global food crisis and rising oil prices threatened to undermine the Government's efforts to provide long-awaited peace dividends and meet the population's high expectations.

26. The delegation had made a number of recommendations for future action, many of which had been reiterated in the progress report on the implementation of the Sierra Leone Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework (PBC/2/SLE/9) and in the conclusions and recommendations of the biannual review of the implementation of the Sierra Leone Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework (PBC/2/SLE/L.1).

27. **Ms. Jahan** (Bangladesh) said that the Commission's recent visit to Sierra Leone had shed much light on progress made and challenges remaining. The delegation had been encouraged by the optimism of the Government and other partners; it had also held a very positive meeting with the Acting Executive Representative of the Secretary-General for Sierra Leone.

28. The report of the second mission of the Peacebuilding Commission to Sierra Leone provided an overview of the main issues affecting Sierra Leone and the key findings of the visit. Youth employment and empowerment remained a cross-cutting issue, having also come up in discussions on investment in agriculture. She welcomed the creation by the Government of a National Youth Commission and nationwide labour centres. Microfinance could play an important role in supporting small and medium-sized enterprises and short-term public work schemes and, therefore, in creating employment opportunities for young people, particularly women. Moreover, investment in youth development was a long-term as well as a short-term issue, as it was essential for peace consolidation. In that regard, the delegation had been pleased to see how one particular project was being implemented on the ground, but felt that more attention should be paid to vocational training, which was essential in preparing young people for employment.

29. The delegation had been very encouraged by the preparations for the upcoming local council elections, which she hoped would be a success. Both the National Electoral Commission and the Political Parties Registration Commission required the Commission's sustained support. The former's efforts in preparation for the 2012 elections should also be supported by all concerned.

30. The Parliament's approval of the Sierra Leone Citizenship (Amendment) Act and the Bankruptcy Act

was to be commended. She looked forward to the full and early implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's recommendations. The National Human Rights Commission, meanwhile, would require support beyond the Peacebuilding Commission itself.

31. The success of Sierra Leone's next poverty reduction strategy paper would clearly hinge on the availability of adequate resources and capacities. In her view, that would be a key issue in Sierra Leone's long-term peacebuilding process. The Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework and the Peacebuilding Commission must complement and reinforce each other, so as to ensure that the next strategy paper was a success. In that regard, greater emphasis should be placed on domestic revenue generation and on strengthening the private sector, so as to ensure a sufficient degree of national ownership of the country's overall development.

32. The development of Sierra Leone's energy sector was critical for overall development and peace consolidation. The delegation had been unable to visit the Bumbuna hydroelectric project owing to inclement weather but had been told that the project was operating successfully.

33. While the Cabinet's endorsement of the Anti-Corruption Strategy was welcome, challenges remained in the areas of capacity-building and private sector development. In that regard, she fully endorsed the recommendations contained in chapter III of the mission report. Capacity-building was particularly important. The international community should assist Sierra Leone in building the capacity of its civil service. The Sierra Leonean diaspora could also be encouraged to invest in the country's development. Lastly, she agreed that food security and investment in agriculture should be added to the list of priority areas.

34. **Mr. Hoscheit** (Luxembourg) said that the current meeting was extremely important since it marked the first biannual review of the implementation of the Sierra Leone Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework, the purpose of which was to assess the extent to which commitments had been translated into action. While the progress achieved thus far was welcome, the Commission would need to focus on challenges remaining in the months ahead.

35. It was crucial for the Commission to conduct regular and objective assessments of progress made and challenges remaining and to have a robust methodology in place to that end. Having a clear, correct and up-to-date assessment of the situation would enable it to provide the most appropriate support. However, every effort should be made to avoid placing too heavy a burden on the national authorities. The Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework provided a mechanism for reviewing and tracking progress. That was the means by which the Commission could assess whether or not the situation in Sierra Leone was really improving and whether or not the country was on the right track. The mechanism should guide the Commission's actions in relation to the national authorities and should also be based on the involvement of all stakeholders, including civil society representatives.

36. Lastly, he welcomed the adoption of the conclusions and recommendations of the biannual review. The document clearly identified those areas where efforts needed to be intensified in the months ahead. He hoped that the biannual review would not become a mere bureaucratic exercise, but rather guide the work of both the Commission and the Sierra Leonean Government in a very direct and operational way.

37. **Ms. Pierce** (United Kingdom) endorsed the conclusions and recommendations of the biannual review. Sierra Leone had achieved a great deal in the seven years since the conflict had ended. The country was at peace and combatants had been disarmed, demobilized and reintegrated into society. The security sector was probably the best in the subregion. Sierra Leone was not at imminent risk of sliding back into conflict and did not pose a threat to regional security. Its two free and fair presidential and parliamentary elections had reintroduced democracy and accountable Government. The upcoming local council elections should cement the peacebuilding gains made thus far. Her Government looked forward to presenting the Security Council with a draft resolution on the establishment of UNIPSIL.

38. That said, everyday life for ordinary citizens remained extremely difficult and Sierra Leone was still at the bottom of the Human Development Index, a situation exacerbated by rising food and fuel prices. There were few roads, little power and irregular water supplies and, to quote the new President, corruption was a cancer destroying the nation. Poor access to justice, high unemployment, particularly among young

people, and limited capacity within the Government and the country as a whole continued to pose a threat to Sierra Leone's hard-won peace and security.

39. While the Commission had played a valuable role in keeping international attention focused on Sierra Leone, the next six months would be critical in ensuring that it made a distinctive contribution to consolidating peace.

40. First, the Commission could use its international legitimacy to assist the Government in setting and sequencing its priorities more effectively, by combining short-term solutions with long-term capacity development. To that end, she endorsed the call for the next poverty reduction strategy paper to reinforce and complement the Sierra Leone Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework.

41. Second, the Commission should speak frankly to existing donors about priorities and progress. In particular, the Commission must do its utmost to prevent uncoordinated programmes that pulled the Government in several directions at once and ensure that commitments were translated into action on the ground.

42. Third, the Commission should find out why certain donors were not yet involved in Sierra Leone. She acknowledged the Chairperson's inroads in that respect and the Government's efforts to attract new donors. The Commission could aid such efforts by stepping up its coordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, for example by agreeing on a common list of target countries, foundations, funds, programmes and international organizations or by conducting joint outreach activities. With regard to the latter, individual Commission members could enhance fund-raising in places where they had useful contacts or visit countries and foundations that were harder for the Ministry to reach.

43. It was incumbent upon all members to ensure that the Commission was as effective and efficient as possible. In that regard, she welcomed the efforts of the Commission's various Chairpersons and of the Peacebuilding Support Office. During its initial phase, the Commission had focused on identifying what worked and what did not. Just because that phase was now over, the Commission should not become complacent, but continue to explore ways of streamlining its work in country-specific configurations. The recent appointment of the Acting Executive Representative of the Secretary-General for Sierra Leone would bring much needed leadership and focus to the work on the ground and was, therefore, to be welcomed. Now the Peacebuilding Support Office must scale up its in-country support. The focus now must be action on the ground, in particular whatever action contributed most to consolidating and sustaining peace. That shift in emphasis would provide greater specificity and focus for country-specific and stakeholder meetings and might also highlight gaps in implementation, which could then be matched to areas of opportunity for donors.

44. Lastly, it was clear from the fact that less than half of the $35 million allocated to Sierra Leone had been programmed and that less than half of that had actually been spent that the Peacebuilding Fund was not meeting its full potential. In that regard, she called for more guidance in the design of projects and more flexibility in the choice of implementing organization. It did not matter whether the implementing organization was inside or outside the United Nations system. It was, however, unwise to rely solely on the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

45. **Ms. Zarra** (Italy) welcomed the progress made thus far, particularly with regard to the implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's recommendations on justice and security sector reform, and commended the Government on its commitment to peacebuilding.

46. In the months ahead, it would be crucial for the Peacebuilding Commission and the Government of Sierra Leone to cooperate on all those areas still requiring support. She mentioned, in particular, the need to develop an agricultural policy in response to the global food crisis; to promote youth employment; to attract skilled Sierra Leoneans back to the country; to support the energy sector, thereby creating an environment conducive to foreign investment and private sector development; and, lastly, to consider the subregional dimensions of peacebuilding, so as to consolidate the stabilization process.

47. **Mr. Kodera** (Japan) said that, since the adoption of the Sierra Leone Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework on 12 December 2007, Sierra Leone configuration members had contributed both collectively and individually to its implementation, as demonstrated most recently by the high-level stakeholders consultation held in May 2008. The

progress report on the implementation of the Framework illustrated the current situation on the ground and the changes brought about as a result of the Framework and the Commission. In particular, the report noted that significant progress had been made in the areas of justice and security sector reform, combating corruption, energy sector development and local council elections, but cautioned that the overall economic situation remained fragile, that the global food crisis and rising oil prices were affecting Sierra Leone's efforts and that such issues as youth employment needed to be addressed further. In view of those observations, Sierra Leone configuration members must continue their efforts to address the challenges remaining in Sierra Leone. In that regard, he noted with concern that the regular meetings between the Sierra Leonean Government and many of its international partners had been suspended (report, paragraph 42). Close communication between the Government and its partners was essential. He requested an update on the matter.

48. One of the Commission's key mandates was to marshal resources for peacebuilding activities in target countries. The ever-growing partnership between Sierra Leone and Japan was a good example in that regard. In addition to chairing the Commission's Organizational Committee and supplementing the activities of the Sierra Leone configuration, Japan had intensified its cooperation with Sierra Leone during the past six months. First, the number of high-level visits between the two countries had increased dramatically. In May 2008, the President of Sierra Leone had participated in the fourth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD), which had aimed to highlight, inter alia, Africa's significant progress towards consolidating peace in recent years. During his visit, he and the Prime Minister of Japan had held a bilateral meeting at which they had reaffirmed their strong partnership and their commitment to peacebuilding in Sierra Leone. Sierra Leone's Minister for Foreign Affairs had also visited Tokyo earlier that year. For Japan's part, the former Japanese Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and the former Permanent Representative of Japan to the United Nations (now Vice-President of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)) had visited Sierra Leone in 2007 and 2008 respectively.

49. Furthermore, Japan had recently increased its peacebuilding assistance to Sierra Leone. Further details could be found in annex II to the progress report on the implementation of the Sierra Leone Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework.

50. Japan was considering granting further assistance to peacebuilding efforts in Sierra Leone, taking into account such emerging issues as the global food crisis and such key events as the upcoming local council elections. Indeed, Japan planned to extend emergency food assistance to Sierra Leone through the World Food Programme (WFP) in July 2008.

51. Lastly, while the Commission's concerted efforts had already made a significant contribution to peacebuilding in Sierra Leone, those efforts must continue. In that connection, he encouraged Sierra Leone configuration members to accelerate the process of translating the Sierra Leone Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework into concrete action. For its part, Japan would continue to support the Commission's efforts in Sierra Leone.

52. **Mr. Løvald** (Norway) said that the fact that the Commission was conducting its first ever biannual review of peacebuilding efforts in a United Nations Member State meant that a core United Nations mandate was taking hold. The conclusions and recommendations of the biannual review of the implementation of the Sierra Leone Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework took the Commission's partnership with Sierra Leone one step further. The document was also an important road map for the next six months. Norway pledged its support for peacebuilding efforts in Sierra Leone, with a view to achieving durable peace and security in the country.

53. **Mr. Curtis** (European Community), speaking on behalf of the European Commission, noted with satisfaction that Sierra Leone, the Peacebuilding Commission and international partners had made significant progress in implementing the Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework. He welcomed, in particular, the progress made by Sierra Leone in the areas of good governance and combating corruption; the steps that were being taken to redress measures that called into question the Government's commitment to good economic governance in the energy field; and the new and increased interventions by Commission members in the country. He hoped that more donors would join peacebuilding efforts in Sierra Leone.

54. Since its adoption, the Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework had proven to be a useful tool in keeping

attention focused on the country and addressing its peacebuilding challenges. However, more efforts were needed to ensure that the Framework was fully implemented on both sides. He called on all stakeholders to strengthen their efforts so as to ensure that the Commission was a success.

55. The European Commission fully agreed with the conclusions and recommendations of the biannual review and attached great importance to the creation and enhancement of a viable and sustainable aid coordination mechanism. National leadership and ownership of the process was key to ensuring a better division of labour among donors. It would also pave the way for new donors. The Government should provide all donors with clear guidance on opportunities for engagement. Donors, meanwhile, must do their homework in order to better coordinate and streamline policies and strategies. Sierra Leone's next poverty reduction strategy paper would play a crucial role in the country's development and in donor engagement. He hoped that the draft of that paper would be finalized soon, so that discussions on priorities and possible support could begin.

56. Lastly, he wished Sierra Leone every success in its upcoming local council elections. He was certain they would follow the example of the 2007 elections and provide tangible proof of Sierra Leone's political maturity.

57. **Mr. Deruffe** (France) said that the report of the Peacebuilding Commission's second mission to Sierra Leone and the progress report on the implementation of the Sierra Leone Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework clearly demonstrated that significant progress had been made in a number of key areas. He noted with concern that the global food crisis had impacted negatively on peacebuilding efforts in the country; the Commission would need to consider how to incorporate that challenge in its future work. In that regard, he agreed that the subregional dimension should figure prominently in the Commission's work. Increasingly, phenomena that threatened the stability of Sierra Leone and its subregional neighbours had common denominators. He cited the global food crisis and security issues relating to the emerging drug trafficking problem as two examples.

58. The current meeting was a milestone in the Commission's work. The fact that it was being held at all demonstrated that the Commission was on the right track. The conclusions and recommendations of the biannual review, which his delegation fully supported, demonstrated the progress made by the Sierra Leone configuration since its inception. His Government attached great importance to the Commission and was delighted to see that evolution. The next phase would require the same level of resources. An important step in that regard would be the finalization of Sierra Leone's next poverty reduction strategy paper, which would offer the international community an opportunity to scale up its support for the country.

59. **Mr. Skau** (Sweden) echoed the call for a transparent and consensus-building peacebuilding process. His delegation endorsed the conclusions and recommendations of the biannual review and agreed with the analysis and assessment provided in the progress report on the implementation of that Framework. He welcomed the progress made thus far with regard to the preparations for the upcoming local council elections, the establishment of the National Human Rights Commission and the constitutional review process, but noted that more progress was needed on youth employment. He wondered whether that sector could be linked even more strongly to private sector development, land reform and, perhaps, access to financing.

60. The Government of Sierra Leone had honoured many of its commitments; the international community must do the same. He called on existing donors to step up their efforts in line with the Sierra Leone Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework and the priority areas identified therein, and urged new donors to come forward. Sweden, a relatively small donor, looked forward to working with emerging donors to find ways of promoting synergies and partnerships. In that regard, it was important to establish, at the country level, effective and accountable mechanisms for pooling funds in support of the sectors identified in the Framework.

61. He welcomed the proposed replacement of UNIOSIL by UNIPSIL and the fact that the United Nations would continue to have an integrated presence in Sierra Leone. He hoped that the new focus would further contribute to peacebuilding efforts on the ground. It was also important to bring the technical capacity of United Nations funds, programmes and agencies into the country. The need to strengthen institutional capacity, highlighted earlier by the representative of Sierra Leone, posed a particular

challenge for UNDP. The following week, during its annual session in Geneva, the Executive Board of UNDP would adopt a strategic plan that made capacity-building the core business of UNDP. He hoped that UNDP would deliver in that regard and provide the Government of Sierra Leone with the support it deserved.

62. His delegation was watching closely the development of Sierra Leone's next poverty reduction strategy paper, particularly in view of the recommendation that the Government of Sierra Leone should ensure that the paper was conflict-sensitive and provided linkages with the Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework. His Government stood ready to contribute to that process in any way it could.

63. Lastly, he expressed concern about the possible impact on Sierra Leone of rising fuel and food prices. Through their actions, the United Nations, the World Bank and the broader international community had demonstrated their commitment to helping Sierra Leone overcome those challenges.

64. **Mr. Crowley** (South Africa) noted with satisfaction the progress made thus far in the implementation of the Sierra Leone Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework and commended the way in which the President had moved the country forward in that regard. He looked forward to seeing tangible benefits for ordinary citizens.

65. At the same time, he noted with concern the many remaining challenges, including increasing food and fuel prices. Sierra Leone's low level of development and high level of youth unemployment made it particularly vulnerable to such challenges. Since the Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework was a flexible document, the Commission would have further opportunities to discuss the best way to address challenges posing a serious threat to the country. Sierra Leoneans should not be robbed of their peace dividends just because of externalities that were forced upon the country.

66. Lastly, he hoped that Sierra Leone's upcoming local council elections would be a success and further consolidate democracy and peace.

67. **Mr. Doraiswami** (India) joined other speakers in welcoming the proposed replacement of UNIOSIL by UNIPSIL and the appointment of the Acting Executive Representative of the Secretary-General for Sierra Leone.

68. His delegation shared the concerns regarding the poor rate of Peacebuilding Fund disbursal and called for better coordination in that regard. In fact, the coordination of the international effort in Sierra Leone in general could be greatly improved. Indeed, it was near impossible for the Government of Sierra Leone to cope if international assistance was not coordinated. Nowhere was that more evident than with regard to rising food and fuel prices, where a coordinated, urgent and effective response was needed to ensure that the most fragile States received assistance.

69. **Mr. Schulenburg** (Acting Executive Representative of the Secretary-General for Sierra Leone), speaking via videoconference from Freetown, said that just the previous week, he had witnessed a unique event in his 29-year-long United Nations career: the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP), the main opposition party, had invited President Koroma to inaugurate its radio station, Radio Unity. During the ceremony, the President had received a warm welcome from SLPP supporters. Furthermore, both sides had proclaimed their respect for the Government and the opposition and their support for the political parties code of conduct and the media code of conduct. The incident augured well for Sierra Leone's future and would, he hoped, have a ripple effect throughout the country.

70. The fact that the United Nations would play a much smaller role in the upcoming elections than it had in previous elections demonstrated the extent to which national institutions had matured. He was confident that the National Electoral Commission, the Political Parties Registration Commission, the police and other Government institutions were now in a position to conduct the local council elections themselves. As he had stressed repeatedly during his meetings with Government officials, it was essential for the elections to be of a very high standard. Sierra Leone's previous presidential and parliamentary elections had been lauded as among the best in that part of the world; he hoped the same would be true of the upcoming elections. Indeed, Sierra Leone's democratic process was among its most important "visiting cards" and would, over time, have an impact on its international reputation and its ability to attract international funding.

71. Within a relatively short period of time, the United Nations presence in Sierra Leone had evolved from one of the largest peacekeeping missions in the world to a mission of at most 60 or 70 staff. As a result, the United Nations would be reducing its involvement in the country and transferring ownership of the process to the national authorities. Moreover, the establishment of a new mission — UNIPSIL — would provide a unique opportunity for the United Nations family and the donor community to redefine their objectives, together with the Government. A key challenge in that regard was to make the international community's work more transparent and more operational for the Government. As part of that, the international community must streamline its objectives and focus its activities so as to produce tangible results and develop simpler and more transparent implementation mechanisms. In that regard, it had been agreed with UNDP to review the functioning not only of the Peacebuilding Fund but also of the basket funds, with a view to making them more transparent and more operational; to giving the Government clear leadership in approving programmes; and to opening the funds in question to other members of the United Nations community, NGOs and other potential implementing partners.

72. **Mr. Minah** (Sierra Leone) expressed appreciation to all those who had paid tribute to his Government's efforts to ensure that Sierra Leone's peacebuilding process stayed on track. He had duly noted all the points raised and assured the Commission that his Government was committed to improving its contribution to the peacebuilding process.

73. Responding to the representative of Japan, he said that the process of engagement between the Government of Sierra Leone and international donors was undergoing a temporary hiatus. Both the Government and President of Sierra Leone were fully committed to effective and regular exchanges with the donor community in Sierra Leone and steps had been taken to re-energize that process. Furthermore, informal consultations and exchanges between the Government and donors were ongoing.

74. The process in which Sierra Leone was engaged was a new process that required collective efforts and collective honesty in identifying gaps, constraints and difficulties for the Government of Sierra Leone, the donor community and the Commission. Only then would policy and objectives be translated into meaningful and positive change for the people of Sierra Leone.

75. Lastly, he expressed appreciation to the Commission for giving him the opportunity to present Sierra Leone's case and provide an update on the situation. The exercise had been a constructive one for all concerned. Going forward, it was important for all sides to reach consensus on where the problems lay and redouble their efforts to solve them.

76. **Ms. McAskie** (Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support) said that, since the current meeting would be her last country-specific meeting on Sierra Leone, she wished to congratulate everyone concerned, particularly the Chairperson and his team, on the work they had done. It would have been impossible to imagine two years before just how much progress would be made in such a short period of time. That the Sierra Leone configuration had come so far was largely due to the desire among Member States to make a real difference at the country level. The decision to place Sierra Leone on the Commission's agenda had been very wise since, although the conflict had ended a few years earlier, the country had still been politically and economically fragile at the time. It had also offered the United Nations an excellent opportunity to test the concept of accompaniment, a concept that everyone had known was needed but which no one had known how to develop. From the very beginning, the Sierra Leone configuration had been characterized by real accompaniment and partnership. It had managed the concept of ownership extremely well: at all times, the Government had been in the driver's seat, supported by the Commission. As the current discussion had demonstrated, the Sierra Leone configuration was still learning and much remained to be done. There was room for improvement within the Peacebuilding Support Office too. In that connection, she would be making a number of recommendations to her successor. It was by no means guaranteed that her successor would follow her advice, but the ongoing presence of her deputy and others at the Peacebuilding Support Office ensured a certain degree of continuity.

77. Lastly, she wished both the Commission and Sierra Leone well as they entered the next phase. Their excellent partnership had provided an extraordinary opportunity to see a country that had gone through the worst achieve the best.

78. **The Chairperson** said that the delegation that had visited Sierra Leone earlier that month had certainly sensed that Sierra Leone was very well prepared for its upcoming local council elections. It had also picked up on the positive spirit to which the Acting Executive Representative of the Secretary-General had referred. On behalf of the Sierra Leone configuration, he wished the Government and people of Sierra Leone every success in those elections.

79. It was clear from the current discussion that the priority areas identified in the Sierra Leone Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework were still very relevant. It was important to continue down that road and make a clear linkage between the Framework and other programming exercises that were ongoing or beginning in Sierra Leone, so as to maintain a certain focus and ensure a complementary and transparent process. Delegations had stressed the importance, inter alia, of youth employment, microfinance, sustained support to the National Electoral Commission and the Political Parties Registration Commission, private sector involvement, speedy implementation of the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and an inclusive constitutional review. The Commission was also aware that it would need to consider a number of new challenges, particularly rising food and fuel prices. Thus far, the focus had been on energy supply; the much larger problem of rising energy prices could not be dealt with by the Commission at the current time. The Commission would, however, need to return to the issue of rising food prices in order to see how that challenge could be incorporated in its future work. In the meantime, he encouraged those present to play an active role in such forums where the global food crisis was already being discussed and, in particular, to use their interventions to stress the impact of the crisis on fragile and post-conflict States.

80. Particular attention must continue to be paid to building capacity, particularly in the civil service sector. By capacity-building he meant assisting the Government not only in making policy but also in implementing policies on the ground. He agreed that the Commission should consider ways of making resources more transparent and review the way in which multi-donor mechanisms functioned on the ground. The better such mechanisms worked, the more funds they would attract. The indications received from Freetown in that regard were very positive.

81. Advocacy was also extremely important. While all stakeholders had done their best, consideration should be given to the possibility of conducting joint outreach activities. While all sides were called on to conduct advocacy work, such work needed to start in capitals, since Governments needed to be encouraged to consider ways of contributing further to the implementation of the Framework. Furthermore, if members of Governments held a more positive view of the Commission's work, they were more likely to encourage their peers to participate more actively in the process. He called on Sierra Leone configuration members to assist in that regard by conveying the message to their capitals that the Commission could work and, provided appropriate assistance was given, would work.

82. The comments regarding the proposed replacement of UNIOSIL by UNIPSIL and the functioning of the Peacebuilding Fund had been duly noted. He hoped that the change to the United Nations presence in Sierra Leone would help all sides focus on the priority areas identified by the Government.

83. He paid tribute to the work done by the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support over the past few years. Together with her colleagues, she had established the Peacebuilding Support Office and helped it find its appropriate place within the Secretariat. She had also been instrumental in providing guidance to the Commission on its working methods and on the strategies it was called on to develop.

84. Lastly, he expressed his appreciation to all those who had participated in the first biannual review of the implementation of the Sierra Leone Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework and wished Sierra Leone every success in its upcoming local council elections.

The meeting rose at 12.20 p.m.